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ABSTRACT

In response to an ambitious acquisitions effort at Trinity University's Elizabeth Coates Maddux Library during 1980/81, the library's cataloging department quintupled its monographic processing output while increasing its staff only by the addition of seven permanent and two temporary support staff members. Production standards, initially established as guidelines with which to determine the need for new positions, became personal goals for copy cataloging staff and were also used as a way of measuring overall progress toward departmental goals. However, because production standards initially were established only for the copy cataloging process, backlogs developed in authorities checking, quality review, and computer input of corrections to catalog copy. As a result, major adjustments had to be made in supervision, record keeping, work flow coordination, and methods of statistical compilation. Ultimately, these changes resulted in improved record keeping, increased awareness that a book on the public shelves rather than a statistical count is the real goal, and better communication between staff and supervisors at every level. Not only have the production standards helped in the attainment and maintenance of departmental goals for production, but they have also focused attention on the need for productivity and helped streamline the entire cataloging operation. (KM)

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Trinity Library Copy Cataloging Production Standards

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by

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Trinity Library Copy Cataloging Production Standards

During 1980/81, Trinity University embarked upon an ambitious capital campaign for the University of $48,500,000, including a goal for designated library funds of a projected $8,000,000 to build library collections from their then-current level of 300,000 volumes to 600,000, plus a goal of an additional $6,000,000 for a designated library endowment for current purchases once the 600,000 volume level was attained. The program included a large retrospective purchasing effort, as well as an increased current materials budget. The University was prepared to start paying for the books as quickly as the library could begin finding them, although the capital campaign was officially announced to the public in November of 1981.

This program continued a trend of increased acquisitions which had begun two years earlier with the completion of a new library building. In 1978/79, book orders and serial standing orders accounted for about 6,400 volumes added. In 1979/80, they accounted for about 12,500 volumes added. But with the new effort to double the size of Trinity's collections, it was projected that the library would need to acquire and process an additional 50,000 volumes each year. This goal was soon modified to 40,000 volumes annually, a number that included periodical bound volumes as well as monographs and standing orders. Of

these, monographs and standing orders were expected to run about 34,000 additional volumes a year. The library was to add more than five times the number of non-periodical volumes we had added two years before, and almost three times the number of the previous year.

In 1980/81, some increased funds had already begun coming to the library, and almost 16,000 volumes were added during the year. For several years the library had utilized LC-MARC cataloging data from MARCIVE, and in July, 1981, the library received its first authorization numbers to use OCLC, inc. as a source for cataloging data. Because the library's experience was that most titles had cataloging copy available through LC-MARC or OCLC, the Cataloging Department could justify hiring only additional support staff. All new positions had to be requested on the basis of estimates of quantity of material processed.

The Cataloging Department had kept monthly individual statistics on total production for many years. The output of the two well-trained and proficient copy catalogers was used to establish a reasonable standard for individual production after the initial training period. The standard was 600 volumes a month for a person working full time as a copy cataloger. This operation did not include authority checking, which was to be transferred to another para-professional position. For other positions in cataloging and acquisitions, estimates of output were based on a short test period of timing the work performed.

Order/verifiers were estimated to process 5,000 titles a year, receivers 10,000 volumes a year, and so forth. In all, the Cataloging Department was able to hire three additional permanent copy catalogers, two terminal operators for MARC data editing and OCLC operation, a labeller, and a maintenance assistant. Subsequently, two temporary copy catalogers were hired using salary savings from vacant positions elsewhere in the library.

The original reason for establishing production standards, then, was as a guideline by which to determine the need for new positions. While production estimates for labelling the volumes processed, filing shelf list cards, searching, acquisitions verifying and ordering, and receiving became departmental goals to be achieved by all staff working in a department, the copy cataloging production goals became individual production standards. One reason is that individual statistics had been kept in the past, and the new production standard was merely an extention of this emphasis on individual statistics. Another reason is that cataloging is viewed as the force that drives all other processing and growth of the collections, since a book is not accessible to our users unless it is cataloged. Keenly interested in seeing library collection growth, the University administration reviewed monthly cataloging statistics. It was evident that each copy cataloger must achieve his or her individual goal for the cataloging department to meet its goal of adding 40,000 volumes a year.

On the whole, the standard has worked well and employee reaction to the standard has been positive. Staff are aware of the importance of the statistical count to the library, and the standard serves to make them conscious of their own output. They know what is expected of them and are evaluated partly on their ability to maintain production. They are concerned about the standard, but not preoccupied. Most of them have never done copy cataloging without a production standard, so there has been little need for adjustment to be made in their mind-set. If they are given other duties besides copy cataloging, their production goals are adjusted accordingly. Staff seldom have difficulty meeting their goals. If they do have problems, they usually have problems in other areas as well, such as understanding cataloging rules, learning tagging, and accuracy of detail.

The biggest challenges of operating with copy cataloging production standards have come not in the standards themselves for the personnel involved, but in supervision, record keeping, work flow coordination, and operational procedures. It became apparent soon that supervision and training of new staff was an enormous task. One of our experienced copy catalogers was assigned responsibility for quality review of the copy catalogers' work, and the professional level head of processing continued to perform a good deal of the training, especially in authority work. However, the task seemed overwhelming at times. The head of processing had difficulty keeping up with her other

duties of an increasing maintenance load, the increased original cataloging load assumed from a vacant position, and simply coordinating the processing workflow, as well as supervision and training. This was too much work for any individual, and it became absolutely necessary to spread the duties out among other staff.

A newly hired professional librarian assumed OCLC supervisory duties as well as monographic original cataloging, training was completed for the high level paraprofessional authorities assistant, and the paraprofessional copy cataloging supervisor assumed more responsibility for work flow and training. Additionally, the copy catalogers assumed responsibility for the authorities checking procedure, freeing the authorities assistant for the work of establishing new authority records. This increased reliance on other staff, especially support staff, freed the professional supervisor's time for maintenance and authorities supervision.

Another outgrowth of the production standards was a modification of statistical record keeping. For the first two years of using the 600 volume per month standard, copy catalogers continued to report their statistics monthly. Their volume count was used for the added volume tally for library statistics, just as it had always been. But there was a problem. Previously all authority work had been done for a record when the copy cataloging was done. Consequently, there was merely the routine

process of entering editorial changes to the cataloging data at a computer terminal and labelling the books before the volumes were released for shelving. Furthermore, since the staff employed had been fully trained and had several years experience in copy cataloging, and since almost all the copy used had been current English language LC-MARC, very little review was necessary, and the time spent in supervision was low.

Although the areas of authorities, supervision, and terminal input had received extra staff, the amount of work involved had not been quantified, and all three areas proved to be places where work became "bottlenecked." Because statistics had already been taken, the Cataloging Department developed an internal authorities and processing backlog that was not reflected in the statistical count.

When it became evident what was happening, the method of statistical counting changed completely in order to avoid the internal backlog. Volumes were counted as they left the department. Additionally, copy catalogers began recording their daily production on a common log, so that at any time during the month, supervisors could tell exactly where the department stood. Also, statistics began to be reported by the Assistant Director for Technical Services on a weekly basis, in order to head off problems before they arose. Because review, record production, and physical processing for public use are now current with copy cataloging, there is very little likelihood for falsification of

statistics or inadequate cataloging, each of which happened in one instance under the older statistical collection method. The net result has been improvement in the overall record keeping for the department and an increased awareness that a book on the public shelves, rather than a statistical count, is the real goal. Another result has been better communication between staff and supervisors at every level.

In summary, the copy cataloging procedures have been enhanced and staff performance improved by the use of production standards. Unfortunately, our initial request for new staff did not include adequate staff for authority work or enough extra staff for supervison. There was too little accounting of how procedures other than simple copy cataloging serve to increase user's access to the collections. Because our initial request for staff had not included adequate staff for authority work or supervision, the department has been forced to make necessary changes in supervisory patterns and cataloging procedures. The lesson that the Cataloging Department has learned is that to quantify part of an operation, it is best to quantify all of it at the outset.

Based on our experience with production goals for copy cataloging, guidelines for a few other operations have been established, e.g., copy searching, order/verifying and receiving, authorities checking, and labelling. These other guidelines are not true production standards for individual personnel, but are

applied as training guidelines and as a tool for workload planning. Still other operations in the department deal with unique situations and require greater flexibility than quotas allow. In such operations, standards have not been established. However, temporary production standards have provided a way of unblocking bottlenecks in some instances.

The Cataloging Department's goal of processing 40,000 volumes a year has been achieved. It is doubtful that the goal could have been reached without the use of production standards. Most copy catalogers have been given duties beyond copy editing, and funds for one temporary position have been moved to another department to meet other staffing needs. The production standards have worked well as an incentive, as a way to focus attention on the need for productivity, and as one guideline for personnel retention and position retention.